



LINKS AND COOPERATION BETWEEN DEVELOPING AND DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE FIELD OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

— CHITOSE SUZUKI*

This time on the invitation of AWIC, I have got this opportunity to speak to all of you. It is indeed a great honour and I express my deep gratitude for it.

This is my second visit to India. Last time I visited India in January, 1984, as a delegate of the team of persons guiding the UNESCO activities. At that time, I visited the Children's Book Trust and met Mr. Shankar. I also met the AWIC Secretary-General, Manorama Jafa, who showed me

various Indian books for children. Out of those I read the first volume of the hard bound work, *Stories from Panchtantra* and was really amazed, because I had known these stories since my childhood. In Japanese literature, these stories are compiled in the work *Konjahu—Monogatari* that was written towards the end of the 11th century. This shows that centuries ago in ancient times also there was an interchange of stories between the two coun-

*Chitose Suzuki, born in Ube-shi, Yamaguchi-Prefecture, Japan has completed the graduate course of Japan Women's University in Tokyo. She majored in Children's Literature, and is Director of Japan Women's University's Alumesh Society, she is also a member of Japan Association of Writers for Children, Children's literature Society of Japan and of Japanese Board on Books for Young People etc. An eminent translator, she has translated books include Angale Sheehan, a picture book of Dinosaurs. Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail* 1988, *the Blind Witness* 1987 all published in Tokyo.

tries. Well, then, what is the situation today? Unfortunately, here is presently not much activity in this field.

After my return to Japan, I contacted some publishers and showed the books that I found interesting. Finally, I could get some of those books published in Japan. Those were *The Kaziranga Trail* by Arup Kumar Dutta and subsequently *The Blind Witness* in 1987 by the same author.

These two books have gained considerable popularity in Japan and the reviews on these have appeared in the leading newspapers and children's magazines.

The Kaziranga Trail has been selected for recommendation by the Japan School Library Association, the Japan Library Association, the Central Child Welfare Council. Similarly, *The Blind Witness* is recommended as the reading book for children during the summer vacations.

Further more, social welfare societies like the Japan Light Hours, the Suzukake Association (Suzukake nokai) from my home town in Yamaguchi prefecture have already published these in the braille script in Japanese for the benefit of the blind readers.

These two Indian books have been well-received probably because they provide refreshing images to the Japanese readers who practically do not know anything about the existing state of children's literature in India. At the same time, these works by themselves excel in quality.

These works with their setting in Indian surroundings portray the realities of mankind and the morale of human beings.

This time I intend to select some good Indian stories for publication in Japan. I would prefer some stories based on the Indian culture. This could be called one type of approach in the direction of our times of today i.e., how to build cooperation and establish links between the deve-

loping and the developed countries in this field.

About 40 years ago, Japan too was a developing country. For a developing nation, it is very hard to concentrate on creating better environment for the reading of children because they have to face various other imminent problems. Here it is important for the developed countries to extend their cooperation.

In my opinion, in the field of literature, there cannot be any difference in the so-called values of the developed and developing nations. Contrary to this, we find that in reality, that in the developing countries, the books of the developed countries are introduced and these are widely read whereas the books from developing countries are not translated or introduced in the developed countries. Here, language of course is one of the restraining factors.

I feel that the foremost reason for this is the lack of information. In order to eliminate this cause, it is vital that the developing as well as the developed nations should create as many opportunities as possible for mutual exchange. In this sense, this New Delhi Seminar is of great significance. This exchange of information would lead to the exploration and publication of outstanding works. Moreover, the force of excellent literary works is such that it would surmount the national boundaries without leaving any difference between the developing and developed to form a common link between the two. And this link would further pave the way for the cooperation between various countries. In fact, it is the literary force of the book like *The Kaziranga Trail* that has formed a link of cooperation between India and Japan and has once again brought me back to India.

Till now, children's literature in Japanese has been confined to Japan due to the

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